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LCPI WORK AT LAKE CHAMPLAIN, 1989

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INTRODUCTION

In 1989, several U.S. senators announced their intention to support legislation seeking to make Lake Champlain the U.S.A.'s sixth "Great Lake," and thus free federal funding for research and cleanup. Though Lake Champlain is rather clean compared to the Great Lakes—Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario—it has problems like soil erosion, phosphorous pollution, pesticide runoff, and a growing population of parasitic sea lampreys. All of these threaten the lake's ecosystem, and thus probably jeopardize its reported colony of Loch Ness monster-like animals dubbed "Champ." As the Lake Champlain Phenomena Investigation (LCPI) continues its ongoing search for evidence of Champ, it supports efforts like increased environmental funding to insure a healthy lake environment; this will allow Champ, although undescribed by science, to subsist and breed.

The 1989 LCPI fieldwork season was a continuance of a high-tech approach to solving the Champ problem, ushered in during 1987 when Klein side-scan sonar and an underwater robot called a ROV (remotely-operated-vehicle) were deployed. That sophisticated equipment was used again in 1988 and 1989 in an attempt to find a carcass of Champ. Beside the high-tech approach to fieldwork, conventional forms of lake monster searching were used again in 1989, such as surface surveillance with cameras and binoculars, and scuba searches.

LCPI fieldwork in 1989 was focused on: (1) trying to locate a carcass of Champ using Klein side-scan sonar surveys; (2) scuba searches looking for Champ; (3) surface surveillance using cameras/binoculars from boats and shore sites; (4) further documentation, analysis, and publication of reported Champ sightings and Champ-related news; (5) encouraging lay and professional people to become involved in the search for Champ; and (6) providing assistance to serious individuals and groups involved in Champ-related research and fieldwork.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The LCPI conducted 32 days of fieldwork at Lake Champlain during 1989. As in 1987 and 1988, donated gear and personnel helped make the expedition well equipped. Donated equipment and personnel came from: Klein Associates, Inc., Salem, New Hampshire; Kaselaan & D'Angelo Associates, Inc., Haddon Heights, New Jersey; Jones' Aqua Sports, Willsboro, New York; and Marine Explorer, Shelburne, Vermont. Martin Klein, Founder and for-

mer President, Klein Associates, Inc., and Vincent Capone, formerly of Kaselaan & D'Angelo Associates, Inc. and now with Steadfast Oceaneering, Inc., acted as primary Klein side-scan sonar operators, with Joseph W. Zarzynski assisting. Kaselaan & D'Angelo Associates, Inc. donated the use of their MiniRover Mk II ROV. It is equipped with a VHS video camera, a manipulator arm for object retrieval, and a 35mm camera for underwater still photography. Kaselaan & D'Angelo Associates, Inc. also provided corporate insurance on the sonar. Providing technical and logistical support were William Key, President, and Garry Kozak, Manager—Field Operations, Klein Associates, Inc., and Chip D'Angelo, President, Kaselaan & D'Angelo Associates, Inc.

Four boats were used during the LCPI fieldwork: a 13-foot-long Avon inflatable (LCPI), a 25-foot-long cabin cruiser (Marine Explorer and Captain Dan Couture), a 21-foot-long runabout (Jones' Aqua Sports and Doug Jones), and a 15-foot-long Boston Whaler (Ralph Veve and Donald Mayland). M. Patram Meaney and Joseph W. Zarzynski donated various camera gear, plus provided lakeside housing/meals to LCPI personnel.

Zarzynski participated in all 32 days of LCPI fieldwork in 1989. Others participated on these dates: M. Patram Meaney (June 11, 24–30, August 5–10, 12–13, 17–19, 23–25); Vincent Capone (August 14–18, 20); Russell Bellico (August 7, 9, 15, 22, 24, 28); Captain Dan Couture (June 11, August 9, 15–17, 22, 24, 28, September 16, October 21); Bob Benway (June 11, 25, September 16); Martin Klein (August 16–17); Jack Sullivan (June 11, August 9); John Farrell (June 11, September 16); Doug Jones (August 7, 14, 20); Don Mayland (July 22, August 17–18); Dave Van Aken (July 6, October 21); Denny Pajak (October 21); Peter Hess (October 21); Gino Bardi (August 9); and John Brewer (October 21).

Special thanks go to Richard Smith and Bonnie Clonan for notifying me of 1989 Champ sightings.

The 1989 LCPI fieldwork consisted of: daytime surface surveillance from shore and boat using 35mm cameras, telephoto lenses, camera tripods, and binoculars; scuba monitoring; scuba diver-held underwater photography; side-scan sonar; and a ROV on location for use should the sonar detect a Champ carcass-like target which needed to be eyeballed.

Lake surface surveillance and most LCPI activities were based from Kimball Dock, Vermont. Numerous surface surveillance sessions from boats were launched based out of: Kimball Dock, Vermont; Burlington, Vermont; Malletts Bay, Vermont; Town Farm Bay, Vermont; Willsboro, New York; and Westport, New York. The side-scan sonar surveys were from boats chartered from businesses owned by Doug Jones and Captain Dan Couture.

The dates of the 32 days of fieldwork were: June 11, 24–30; July 6, 22; August 5–10, 12–20, 22–25, 28; September 16; October 21. Daytime surface surveillance from shore or boat(s) was conducted during all 32 days; boat

deployed side-scan sonar surveying was done during five days; the ROV was on site for seven days, but was never deployed as no significant sonar-discovered target was located in deep water to ROV dive and identify; and 26 scuba dives were conducted, 16 with diver(s) using a Nikonos underwater camera.

The 26 scuba dives were made as part of the LCPI's ongoing underwater reconnaissance in search of a carcass of Champ. The dates of these scuba dives, the diver(s), and the number of dives were: June 11 (Benway, Farrell, Sullivan, and Zarzynski—2 dives); June 25 (Benway and Zarzynski—2 dives); July 6 (Van Aken and Zarzynski—2 dives); July 22 (Benway, Mayland, and Zarzynski—1 dive); August 7 (Bellico, Jones, and Zarzynski—2 dives); August 9 (Bardi, Bellico, Meaney, Sullivan, and Zarzynski—2 dives); August 15 (Couture and Zarzynski—1 dive); August 17 (Couture—1 dive); August 18 (Capone, Mayland, and Zarzynski—1 dive); August 22 (Bellico, Couture, and Zarzynski—3 dives); August 24 (Bellico, Couture, and Zarzynski—1 dive); August 28 (Bellico, Couture, and Zarzynski—3 dives); September 16 (Benway, Farrell, and Zarzynski—3 dives); and October 21 (Brewer, Hess, Pajak, Van Aken, and Zarzynski—2 dives).

Results

No visual sighting of a Champ-like animal was made by LCPI personnel during the 1989 fieldwork season.

However, our side-scan sonar surveying using a Klein 500 kHz unit did produce some "targets" to eyeball. On August 15, the sonar noted a target which we thought was inanimate in nature, possibly some type of shipwreck. Captain Dan Couture and Joseph W. Zarzynski dived the target site, but it was identified as a log. On August 17, another side-scan sonar target was noted. Like the target of August 15, this was shallow enough to use a scuba diver to eyeball rather than the MiniRover Mk II ROV, which was at our base camp should we have needed it to examine deep water targets. Captain Dan Couture dived the August 17 sonar target. He reported visibility at about three feet, but was able to identify the target as a 1960's-era automobile with the trunk open. He got the license plate number, we buoyed the site, and we reported our unusual discovery to the Vermont State Police. Since there was low visibility, Captain Couture was unable to determine if the vehicle contained the remains of a body. To date, we have not been notified by Vermont law enforcement officials if their dive squad examined the vehicle and its contents.

Our five day side-scan sonar surveying also picked up a possible shipwreck target in deep water on the New York state side of the lake. Thus, our remote sensing surveying, though not finding a Champ carcass, as was our intention, did once again demonstrate that cryptozoological expeditions can turn up fascinating and noteworthy non-cryptozoological finds.

The year 1989 was a rather quiet one for reported Champ sightings. Only four sightings were reported to the LCPI. They are listed below in chronological order (Fig. 1):

(1) July 6, 1989: Renee Chagnon and several other people; in Malletts Bay, Vermont, near Clay Point; while boating, about 7:30 p.m.; the group saw an animal they at first thought was a log; it then showed two humps, and lifted its head up about 12 inches (head described as twice the size of a human head); black in color; animal was 15–20 feet long; when the boat went over the site, the boat's fish-finder sonar picked up a large object 53 feet down in 83 feet of water (however, they were unable to freeze the sonar screen to save the record); witnesses about 100 feet from animal; no camera aboard; sighting lasted 5–7 minutes.

(2) July 8, 1989: Robert H. Hemming; between Chimney Point, Vermont, and the Crown Point State Historic Site, New York; 10:45 p.m.; animal described as "three tube-like humps protruding out of water 12 to 15 feet in length"; "no head seen"; "very dark in color"; range about 1,000 yards; sighting lasted 10–15 minutes; no camera at hand.

(3) Week of July 17, 1989: Ronald and Paula Young; between Burtons Island, Vermont, and Hathaway Point, Vermont; on very calm waters they both saw a "large black object" about 24-feet-long at a distance; no range given; weather was hot and humid; no time of sighting given; the Youngs stated: "The only strange thing, which we have heard before on the ocean, was the sound of a mammal's blow hole, as a whale or porpoise would make when surfacing"; no photographs taken.

(4) August 5, 1989: Shirley and Joe Marinello; sighting was "60 to 80 yards due east of the Pines Restaurant on Route 9, Village of Port Henry, New York"; sighting was at 8:05 p.m., lasting for 20 minutes; Joe Marinello described the sighting as: "We saw what appeared to be a series of fins sticking up out of the water and moving slowly to the northeast; suddenly the 'fins' separated, and one set moved rapidly to the east about 100 yards from the first. This set disappeared after a brief time. They appeared to descend in a stepping motion under the water. The first set continued to move northeast at a very slow rate of speed. During the whole sighting, I saw what I took to be a shadow in the water which preceded the fins to the north by 10 or 15 feet and seemed to follow by 20 or 30 feet"; no photographs taken.

Future Plans

The LCPI plans to continue its fieldwork at Lake Champlain in 1990 doing conventional camera surveillance and scuba diver reconnaissance, plus more high-technology work involving side-scan sonar and a ROV. We also hope to be able to continue field tests of John Becker's video digitizer computer monitoring system (VDCMS), which was used at the lake in 1987 and 1988.

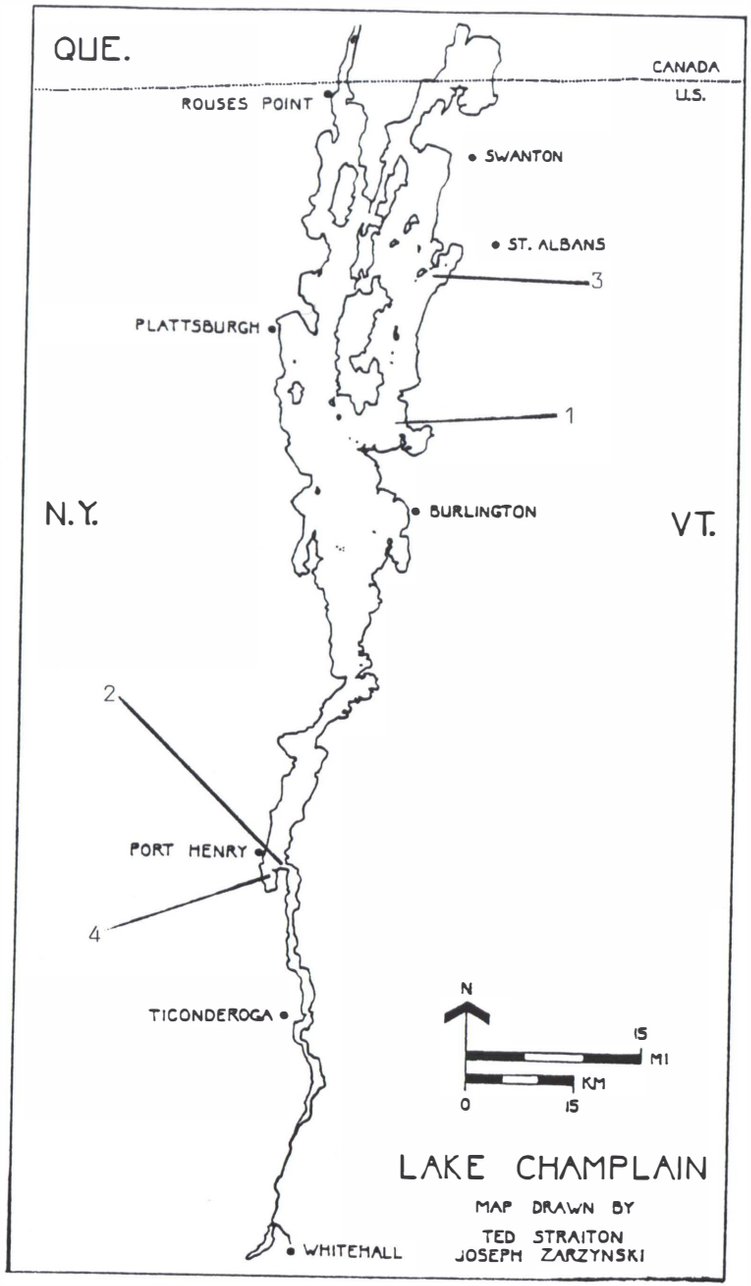

FIG. 1.—Map of Lake Champlain, with numbers indicating the locations of the eyewitness sightings reported to LCPI in 1989.

We believe the carcass search strategy, though a definite "long shot," still offers the best potential results: positive proof. However, LCPI urges a passive approach to securing a carcass of Champ, and not one in which such a cryptid is hunted down to secure the specimen. The LCPI also asks its ISC colleagues to write to us with suggestions on the carcass search strategy, so that we can better maximize our limited time with the high-tech equipment.